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Q5(d)

Is male authority absent in matrilineal society? Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Is male authority absent in matrilineal society? Discuss
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Matriliny is descent through women, not **matriarchy**.

Mother's brother and public office often keep male authority.

Levi-Strauss, **Weber**, and feminist structural accounts warn against reading female houses as female rule.

Modern law and markets can restore husband-centred power.

- **Answer:** male authority is relocated, not absent.

Introduction

Matriliny traces descent and often property through the mother's line. It is not the same as **matriarchy**, the rule of women. Male authority is typically relocated, not deleted.

Body**What **matriliny** organises**

- Descent, inheritance, and sometimes residence (matrilocality) follow women as links.
- Khasi, Garo, and Nayar-type cases in the Indian discussion show maternal kin as the property-holding group.

Where men still command

- The mother's brother often holds jural authority over sister's children. Claude Levi-Strauss's alliance already placed men as exchangers of spouses in many kinship models.
- Political office, public ritual, and the state have often remained male even where houses are female-centred.
- **Max Weber**'s traditional domination can sit in maternal uncles as well as in patriarchs.
- Feminist work after Sylvia Walby and Ann Oakley treats patriarchy as linked structures. Kinship form is only one structure.

Discussion

- Male authority is not absent. It is often avuncular rather than husband-centred.
- Colonial and modern law, **Census** household headship, and church or market jobs can re-patriarchalise matrilineal groups.
- Absence of husband-right is not absence of male right.

Flow diagram

Matriliny -> Descent property via women
Matriliny -> AV Mother's brother jural power
Matriliny -> Often male public office
AV -> Male authority present

Conclusion

Matriliny relocates male authority toward maternal kin and public office. It does not prove a society without men's power. Distinguish descent from rule, and watch law and market rewrite the house.

Facts & figures

Matriliny

Membership and often inheritance traced through the female line.

Avunculate

Authority of the mother's brother over sister's children in many matrilineal systems.

Khasi-Garo

North-east Indian cases used in textbooks of matrilineal property and changing male office.

Matriarchy

Rule by women as a political type; empirically rare and not implied by matriliney.